

2442. *Philosophy*
THE
Eternal OBLIGATION
OF
Natural Religion;
OR, THE
Foundation of MORALITY
TO
GOD and MAN.

BEING

An Answer to Dr. *Wright's* Remarks
upon Mr. *Mole's* SERMON.

By PHIL-ORTHOS. *R*

George Johnson

Omnium, quæ in hominum doctorum disputatione versantur,
nihil est, perfectò, præstabilius, quàm planè intelligi nos ad
justitiam esse natos; neque opinione, sed naturâ, constitutum
esse jus. *Cic. de Leg.*

Multi de Diis prava sentiunt. *Id. de Tusc. Qu.*

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THE
Eternal OBLIGATION
OF
Natural RELIGION;
OR, THE
Foundation of MORALITY
to GOD and MAN, &c.



S Natural Religion is the Foundation of Revealed, and the proper Standard, with which Men must compare all Principles, and by which they must examine all Doctrines, in order to their being happy, either here, or hereafter; therefore, it may not be amiss, to give you a brief Account of it; or to show you, what we are, properly, to understand by it.

By Natural Religion, then, I think, we may understand all those Things, which intelligent Beings, by the right Exercise of their reasonable Faculties, can discover to be their

Duty, without a supernatural Revelation to direct them; and upon that Discovery so made, or capable of being made, which they are obliged to pursue and practise, in their several Circumstances, Offices, or Relations in Life. This, in the General, and according to the strictest Importance of the Words, seems to be a proper Definition of it. Thus, to love and reverence the Deity, to do Justice between Man and Man, between our Neighbours and our selves, and to be charitable and benevolent to all proper Objects; are all Branches of Natural Religion, which every Man's Reason may discover to him, and which the present Constitution of Things requires from him, and necessarily subjects him to.

FROM these general Principles or Duties, which are plain and obvious to every Understanding, that's ever exercised in Thinking at all, others of a particular Nature do result, and derive their obligatory Force, according to the different Circumstances of Times, or the new Relations of Beings to one another; and these Particulars may continue or cease, accordingly as such Circumstances or Relations do; while the general Principles on which they are founded, are strictly eternal and unchangeable in their Nature *. Thus the general Principles of Justice and Benevolence, are always to be supposed valid in themselves,

* *Communis lex nunquam immutatur, cum secundum naturam sit: jus verò scriptum sæpius. Arist. ad Theod.*

themselves, and preferable to Fraud and Ill-nature; though the particular Ways after which they should be practised, can never be determined, without the Consideration of different Beings, and the various Relations they stand in to each other.

BUT, though this be a self-evident Truth, and what every body at first View may perceive; 'tis still necessary to enquire, how Mankind discover their Obligations, and what is the Foundation of Morality to them, considered as reasonable Creatures and moral Agents: Since every one is determined, in his Actions, by some Motive, which makes it a Matter of Choice to him, to act one way rather than another.

THE true Foundation of it, then, will be found to be the different Reasons and Natures of Things; by which I understand the Proportions or Disproportions, which Things bear to one another; whereby their Beauty, or Deformity, their Fitness, or Unfitness, does appear, and becomes a Foundation of Desire, or Dislike, to an intelligent Being. On these I take Morality to be founded, and shall now proceed to the Proof of it. And,

IN my Entrance upon this Point, it will be proper for me to distinguish between the Beauty or Fitness of Things, or Objects; and the Beauty or Fitness of Actions, or Effects. The former (perhaps not improperly) may be called Natural, the latter Moral Beauty.

THUS,

TH U S, the exact Proportions of the various Parts of a Building ; or the Uniformity of Features in a Face or a Statue ; is, in strict Propriety, their Fitness to one another, and what really constitutes their natural Beauty.

AN D the Uniformity of Worship, in a Religious Society, wherein there are various Persons, addressing the Deity after a decent Manner, and having Hearts and Mind correspondent to it ; is, in strict propriety, the Fitness of such Worship, and entitles it to the Name of moral Beauty.

IF there be any Disproportion or Unfitness in either, so far their Beauty is defective ; and so far it is Imperfect in Degree : If in Things or Objects, 'tis disagreeable to Sense ; if in Actions or Effects, 'tis offensive to the Mind ; and excites Resentment, Censure, and Condemnation. Disproportion in the first, may be termed an Imperfection ; Disproportion in the second, may be termed a Fault ; and is more, or less criminal, according to the Degrees of it.

OF these Reasons, Relations or Proportions, of Things there are immutable Patterns existent in Nature, incapable of being destroyed by any Power ; and independent of any Cause, Mind, or Will ; though not to be discerned until some Mind might exist.

BY these the Creator conducted himself in the Formation of the Universe, so that all its Parts correspond to each other, form such an agreeable

agreeable Harmony and Uniformity, amidst the vast Variety which it contains.

By these he directs himself in the Government of it ; establishes a Connection between Causes and Effects ; and over-rules both by his superintending Providence, for the general Good of the whole System.

HENCE proceed that Beauty and Regularity, which appear so conspicuous and dazzling in the Creation, and present themselves to every Intelligence.

FROM these, again, proceeds that pleasing Satisfaction, which breaks in upon the Mind, in the Contemplation of them.

HEREUPON the Creator, surveying the Works which he had formed, and finding them all very good, or all conformable to the Rules of Wisdom, and perfectly beautiful upon the whole ; received a peculiar Complacency and Delight. And,

HEREUPON good Men contemplating his Operations, which bear such Signatures of infinite Skill, enjoy the most exquisite Satisfaction and Pleasure. And in every agreeable Object it holds alike, if Men will be at any Pains to observe it, or to think of it. A beautiful Face, fine Picture, or curious Landskip, do all, unaccountably, strike the Imagination, and convey a secret Pleasure to the Mind. And in Actions 'tis just the same as in Things. For,

IN the right Performance of these, there is a great deal of Beauty to be discerned, under whatever Character they be consider'd, or under whatever Class they be rank'd. In Dancing, Bowing, Fencing, Riding, or Walking, there's a particular Decorum, which, when rightly observed, is taking, almost, to every body, and seems vastly more agreeable to them, than a clownish and unpolite Air. But, besides these,

THERE are others of greater Importance to Mankind, which I shall mention. Of this Sort are all just, merciful, and benevolent Actions, which seem always more, or less beautiful, and, thereupon, yield more, or less Pleasure, according to their different Degrees of Excellence. To an Agent they give intellectual, to a Patient sensual Pleasure. For Example,

WHEN a Person pays another what he owed him, or shows him Clemency or Compassion, when he might have demanded Justice, or is generous and benevolent when Justice could not oblige him; such Actions being done with a hearty good Will, being likewise proportioned to a Man's Necessity; have something in them that's charming and great, and excites in the Mind a pleasing Admiration. But as the last of these is the noblest in its Kind, so is it, likewise, the most amiable and lovely, and strikes the Mind with resistless Force *. As when A

* Quæ autem natio non comitatem, non benignitatem, non gratum animum, et beneficii memorem, diligit? Cic. de leg.

A Man ventures his Life or Fortune, to save his Country, or the Lives and Liberties of his fellow Creatures, or fellow Subjects, or does any other thing that's heroick or brave; an inimitable Beauty results from it, which charms every one that sees or hears it, and lays them under a Necessity to acknowledge, that it was laudable, and fit to be done. Now,

THE Reason of this may be, because such an Action seems to be done according to the exactest Rules of Proportion; it being vastly more proper, that a single Person, whose Life or Welfare bears little or no Proportion to those of the Community, should hazard or sacrifice all that's dear and valuable to himself, rather than risque, and expose to Ruin their Lives and Welfare: And therefore the Action displays the most perfect Beauty, and will be applauded by all, excepting those who are selfish; and so thoughtless and simple, as to imagine their own Happiness secure without the Society. And,

As all Men see a Beauty in the good Actions of others, whereby they are constrained to acknowledge their Fitness; so they also discern it in their own, whereby they receive an inexpressible Delight. The first Thing that presents it self to a Person when he thinks upon any such Actions, is their Beauty. It draws his Attention; makes him consider and discern the good Tendencies of them; upon this Discernment, extorts his

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Approbation ; raises a Complacency (though still he is free to act or not act ;) infuses Pleasure into his Mind when he resolves upon them ; and gives him the most Pleasure, upon Reflection, after Performance. And as they are more or less benevolent, or afford more or less Pleasure to others ; their Beauty or Fitness seems greater or lesser to him ; gives him more or less Pleasure in resolving upon them ; and more or less Pleasure, accordingly, after he has performed them. And in a Course of good Actions it holds alike, according to the Number and Quality of them.

MEAN time, we are not to imagine, in every individual Act of Justice or Benevolence, which we either resolve upon or do, that we are incited thereto, from an immediate Prospect of Pleasure to our selves. This in the Nature of Things is scarce possible. And Men will find that they do many good Things, without a View to any Interest, but the serving their fellow Creatures ; being, at once, ravished with the Beauty or Fitness of them. Those Persons, especially, who have often been employed in promoting the Welfare of others, may reasonably be thought to do several Actions of this Sort, without a Regard to any selfish Ends ; having acquired by Custom and Practice, such a Habit or Turn of Mind, as readily disposes them to the doing of them *. But yet publick and private
Happiness

* Tutum iter est, jucundum est, ad quod natura te instruxit.
Sen. Ep. 13.

[I I]

Happiness are so inseparably connected, and so closely blended, that we can scarce attempt any thing that's generous or benevolent, without finding now and then some Degrees of Pleasure upon it: So wisely has the indulgent Father of Spirits framed the humane Nature; for the better Securing the Welfare of his whole Family, whom he has made to be Members one of another, as well as dependent upon himself.

THE first Way, therefore, that we come to know the Goodness of any Action, is by discerning the Beauty of it, which gives us Reason to believe, that it's fit in its own Nature; and will yield either a present, or future Pleasure to others, as it seems agreeable and delightful to us, and free, in the main, from any real Turpitude or Deformity.

BUT, here it may not be amiss, nor should we forget to consider the Beauty or Fitness which is to be seen in the regular Performance of various Actions, or in the Digesting them into a proper Order, according to Men's different Circumstances, Offices, or Relations in Life. For, Persons may do Things that are laudable and good, and that seem very amiable and pretty in their Place, which, nevertheless, on account of their untimely Performance, are faulty.

HE who devotes the whole, or most of his Time, to the Worship of God, and neglects other Duties of social Life, which the Circumstances of his Family, or the Rela-

tions he stands in to others of his fellow Creatures, required from him; is guilty of considerable Weakness, and does not act the Part of a reasonable Being. And though he may receive some Pleasure by it; yet 'tis more the Result of enthusiastick Heat, or a flatulent Wind, than of any sober and rational Reflection. On t'other hand,

HE who minds some Duties of social Life, who is careful and laborious to provide for his Family, but withal is defective in his Charity to others, who are equally Members of civil Society; is likewise faulty in his Behaviour, and does not upon the whole, act according to the Beauty or Fitness of Things; nor will his Conduct appear very agreeable to him, upon an impartial View of it *.

WHEREAS he who surveys the whole Circle of Duties which surround him, and discharges the various Obligations which he's under to God and Man, to one Man and another; manages as became him in every Part of Life, and therefore must be vastly pleased with his Conversation, when he's going to make his Exit out of this World, and looks back upon what's past.

SUCH an orderly or regular Disposol of virtuous Actions may be called the Beauty or Fitness of a Man's general Conduct; and, when it's carefully attended to or observed, it seems the most glorious and charming of all,

* Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines,
Quos ultra, citraque, nequit consistere rectum. *Hor. sat. lib. 1.*

all, yields a Person the most complete Satisfaction, and most consummate Pleasure upon a Review; because he sees that his Actions thus disposed are perfectly uniform, amidst their Variety; and all bear such an exact Proportion to one another, in regard of Time and Place, as the Nature and Reason and Circumstances of Things required from him.

THE Proportions of Things, then, constitute their Beauty or Fitness, and these again excite our Approbation, whereby we infer their Tendency to give others Pleasure, which, while it continues, is real Happiness; and therefore we allow that they are morally Good. And again,

THE Disproportions of Things constitute their Deformity or Unfitness, and these again excite our Dislike, whereby we infer their Tendency to give others Pain; and therefore we allow that they are morally Evil. Hence it is,

WHEN one Man deals cruelly by another without any Reason or Ground, that the Action, of whatever Sort it is, seems base and vile, and to have a certain Turpitude or Unfitness in it; as the Patient did nothing proportionable to what he suffered: And hereupon we pronounce it an immoral Action. And hence

IT is, When a Magistrate inflicts a severe Punishment upon an Offender, for a small Fault, the Punishment not being proportioned
to

to it, makes the Action appear with a real Deformity, and hereupon we reckon it unfit and unjust, as the Patient suffers more than he ought to have done. Hence it is again,

T H A T when a Man overloads a Horse with any sort of Carriage, it seems ugly and disagreeable to us, the Load not being proportioned to his Strength; and therefore we deem the Agent guilty of an Immorality, for giving the Animal unnecessary Pain. And in every thing of the like Sort, 'tis just the same *. An over-bearing Passion, violent Anger, or keen Resentment, for Things of a trifling or inconsiderable Nature, do always look with a wrinkly Face, and bear sure Marks of Deformity and Guilt, there being no Rules of Proportion observed in them.

I might carry this to a much greater Length, but what has been said may be sufficient for my present Purpose. And,

W E may learn from it that there's a superiour Excellence in Virtue beyond Vice, or in Moral Good beyond Moral Evil; because the former has a Tendency to preserve the Beauty, Harmony, and, in consequence of that, the Happiness of the World; whereas the latter has a Tendency to destroy them, and to introduce Disorder and Misery into it. The one, therefore is laudable and desirable;

* Nihil omnino, neque pulchrum, neque decorum, reperiri potest, quod non cum lege aliquâ communicet. *Cic. Orat. 1. cont. Arist.*

able; the other, again, detestable and sinful; and the Difference between them eternal and unchangeable *. So that no Power nor Authority, no Laws nor Commands, no Mind nor Will, no Circumstances nor Times, no Relations nor Habitudes, no Compacts nor Agreements, could make Good Evil, or Evil Good; Virtue Vice, or Vice Virtue; but whatever were the Frame or Constitution of Things, one would always be different from the other; one more amiable and eligible than t'other: Moral Beauty still Moral Beauty; Moral Turpitude still Moral Turpitude; Moral Good still Moral Good; Moral Evil still Moral Evil.

FOR, the Moral Natures and Differences of Things receive not their Being from any Agent or Cause, nor depend for their Support upon any Mind. Their own Existence is absolutely necessary, as the very Existence of God himself. Whether, therefore, there were a Divinity, or not; any intelligent Being, or not; any Creator, Creature, or not; such Moral Entities would always subsist, and be just the same that they're now. And, for the

* Quòd si populorum jussis, si principum decretis, si sententiis judicum jura constituerentur; jus esset latrocinari, jus adulterare, jus testamenta falsa supponere, si hæc suffragiis aut scitis multitudinis probarentur. Quòd si tanta potentia stultorum sententiis atque jussis, ut eorum suffragiis rerum natura vertatur, cur non fanciunt, ut, quæ mala perniciosaque sunt, habeantur pro bonis et salutaribus? Aut cur, cum jus ex injuriâ facere lex possit, bonum eadem facere non potest ex malo? Atqui nos, legem bonam a malâ, nullâ aliâ, nisi naturæ, normâ, dividere possumus. *Cicero. de Leg.*

the same Reason, they are absolutely eternal, and incapable of suffering any Alteration or Change. Whatever Mind, then, first existed, could not possibly destroy the Difference between them, nor make an Identity of their distinct Natures. Or whatever Mind first thought about them, must see the eternal Differences of them. Hence it will follow, that no Will whatever can identify Things that are necessarily distinct, because the Will of every Being is always determined by the Dictates of the Understanding, and approves or allows all Things to be, as the Understanding represents them to it. And as the Understanding is passive in perceiving such moral Entities, that is, cannot but see they are of such a Nature, and different from one another, that Beauty is different from Deformity, or Pleasure from Pain; so the Will, being subsequent to its Perceptions, and under a Necessity to approve its Dictates, cannot possibly make such Entities either be, or not be, otherwise than they are. The Will, in such case (to speak more properly) is not concerned with them, but the Understanding only, which sees or perceives them (while it is conversant about them) to be what they are in themselves.

'Tis true that some Philosophers have observed, there is such a close and necessary Connexion between the Operations of these Faculties, that the Mind never understands any thing but it wills the Understanding of it; nor wills

wills any Thing, but it understands the willing of it. But even allowing this were true (which by the by is an odd Way of Speaking) it can't, in the least, invalidate my Argument, nor can any thing be inferred from it, that makes against it. Because such moral Entities and their Differences don't owe their Being to either of these Faculties separately, or both of them conjunctly; but are self-existent, and (as I said before) independent. Let any Man try if the Relations, or Proportions of the three Angles of a Triangle to one another, or their necessary Equality to two Right ones, depend upon any Operations of his Mind; and he will soon see that they don't. Or let him try if he can identify the opposite Ideas of Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, or the like, or destroy their moral Differences, by any Act of his Will; and he will soon find that he cannot. The Reason of it is not because he's limited in his Capacity, or is a weak and imperfect Being; but because to suppose it implies a Contradiction, and because the Thing is impracticable in its Nature. And therefore suppose a Being of infinite Perfections should attempt the doing of it, 'twould still be equally impossible for him; because such Perfections could only qualify him to discern such Entities, and their moral Differences, with greater Perspicuity and Clearness, and thereupon to order his Designs and Actions to greater Advantage; but never could enable

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him to remove the Boundaries between such moral Entities, nor identify their Natures which are diametrically opposite.

FROM all which 'tis abundantly evident, that there is an eternal Difference, in the Nature of Things, between Moral Good and Evil; between Beautiful and Deformed; between Fit and Unfit; independent of any Being whatever; and previous to the Appointment of any Mind or Will: And that this Difference in the Nature of Things, the Beauty of one beyond another, or the Fitness of one beyond another; is the primary Foundation of all Morality, to all reasonable or intelligent Beings; and a Reason of Choice to God himself.

IF it be said (as the learned Author of the Remarks tells us) " That there is no Rule
" or Foundation of Morality to the Divine
" Being, but his own Perfection and Blessed-
" ness; that he is the unerring Judge of
" what is fit, or unfit, for him to do, by con-
" sulting with himself alone, and not with
" another; not with any thing *ab extra*, or
" that can be said, truly and properly to be
" distinct from him";

I Answer, That if by Perfection (Blessedness has no meaning here) in God, be signified the perfect Rectitude or Comprehensiveness of his Capacity, whereby he's able, infallibly to judge of what is fit, or unfit, in its own Nature; then, it must be granted that there can be no other Rule of Morality to him but this; the natural Capacity of every
Intelligence,

Intelligence, and consequently that of the Creator, being the proper Rule to them, severally, to judge of Things by. But if by Perfection in God be meant (as our Author seems to intend) the perfect Rectitude of his Nature alone, separate from, and exclusive of, any such Fitness in Things, previous to his own Constitution of them; then, I deny that it is any Foundation of Morality to him, or that, by this Means, he can, possibly, be a moral or free Agent at all. For,

EITHER the Divine Being is determined in his Actions, by particular Motives or Reasons, founded in, and resulting from, the moral Differences of Things, fit, and unfit, which appear to him, and operate morally upon his Mind; or else he must be incited to what he does by a physical Necessity and Impulse. One, or t'other of these, must be granted. But the latter cannot be; because then it would not only follow, that he is not a moral and free Agent; pursues no End; nor makes any Choice; but that, likewise, he can do nothing that is praiseworthy or commendable; that whatever he does, he must have done from Eternity, created the World from Eternity; made all Things from Eternity. The Reason of it is plain and obvious. All such physical, natural, or immediate Necessity of Acting, excludes the Possibility of any Will or Choice in God; and would be as inseparable from his Nature and Essence, as his Eternity or Immenity. And therefore if he acted, or were

incited to act, after such a Manner; he could no more be said to be free, in doing any thing, than in being omnipresent, or self-existent, which has no Dependence upon his Will or Choice at all. Nor could Men have any Reason or Ground to intreat him for Favours; to praise him for Mercies; to bless him for their Creation, or Preservation; or to thank him for their Redemption or Salvation, any more than to thank the Sun for its Light, or the Air for its Fluidity. To assert which, were not only absurd, but also everfive of all Religion; and to exclude a Divinity out of Men's Thoughts. And therefore the first must be true, namely, that God is determined in his Actions, by particular Motives or Reasons, founded in, and resulting from, the moral Differences of Things, fit, and unfit, in their own Nature, which appear to him, and operate morally upon his Mind. And then it will follow, by fair Consequence, that such Reasons or Motives aforesaid are, in point of Order, prior to his Will, and to the Exercise of any of his natural, or moral Perfections; and that such Perfections, however they may be a Rule, are not the only, nor any Foundation of Morality to him, separate from, and exclusive of such determining Reasons or Motives.

IF it be said, that we ought not to separate the Will of God from his Counsels and Attributes; that to do so destroys our Idea of him; that he never wills any Thing without

out their Concurrence; that both included do constitute his Will; and, that nothing in point of Order, is previous to the latter, and therefore not previous to the former, or the like;

I answer, That when according to our Capacities, we would form an adequate Idea of God, as an infinite, eternal, self-existent, almighty, alwise, and perfectly good Being, we cannot indeed well separate Will (consider'd barely as a Faculty of his Mind, determinable or capable of being determin'd to pursue good Ends,) from his Attributes or Perfections, any more than we can separate Understanding; without excluding something out of such Idea, which should be included in it; and without having imperfect Notions of his Nature and Essence. But when we consider Will in him, as a moving Principle, actually determin'd, by proper Reasons, to pursue such Ends (in which Sense it shou'd be consider'd) and inclining or disposing him, to the Pursuit, of 'em; then must we distinguish it from his Attributes or Perfections, as well as from the Understanding itself; otherwise the most monstrous Absurdities, and damnable Errors will follow upon it, that can be imagin'd. Such as,

THAT he must will all Things, by a physical Necessity, which, as I have showed, is the same Thing as to will and not will at the same Time. Or, which is worse, that he can will nothing but himself; there being nothing fit or unfit in its own Nature,
and

and every thing, existent, or possible, being one of these. Or, which is still worse; that he can produce nothing besides himself; there being no End propos'd but his own Perfections and Will; and, therefore, no Object, numerically different from these, to be aim'd at. Or, which is as bad as any; that Vice is as agreeable to his Will, as Virtue; bad Actions as rewardable as good; since he must will all Things, after the same Manner, that he understands them. And then, what a brave sinning Trade might safely be carried on, God knows, tho' he wills none of it. All these Things are fairly deducible from the learned Author's Principles, as will appear to any Man that thinks at all: And they tend directly to *Epicurism*, *Hobbism*, *Atheism*, and every Thing that's evil; sap the very Foundation of all Religion, and, if once publickly believ'd or receiv'd, wou'd do more Mischief in a Day, than a Man cou'd preach down in a Year: Which, did I incline to enter upon a distinct Consideration of each of 'em, I might easily demonstrate. As, therefore, they are so extremely absurd in themselves; so very dishonourable to the blessed and good God; and of such dangerous Consequence to Mankind; we, undoubtedly, must, and ought in this Case, to distinguish between the Attributes and Will of God; and, by Parity of Reason, must allow, that there is a necessary and eternal Difference, between the Fitness and Unfitness, the Beauty and Deformity, the

the Goodness and Pravity of Things, previous to his Will or Constitution of 'em. But,

IF it should be still said that, according to his Will and Attributes connected, he produc'd all Things; gave different Natures, Relations, and Ends to different Beings; that from these, answer'd or not answer'd, arise the Idea of the Fitness or Unfitness of Things; that they, again, are consequent upon these Relations; and therefore are posterior to the Will of God;

TO this I answer, (tho' I have already obviated the Objection,) that God being infinitely powerful, wise, and good, form'd several Species or Classes of Beings, gave different Natures and Faculties to them, and design'd they might enjoy such Degrees of Happiness, as they might severally be qualified for. Thus he form'd some sensitive; others rational or intelligent; and both to be happy in their own Way. And, as Being was purely his own Donation, he might have indued the former with the Nature of the latter, or *vice versa*; *i. e.* he might have made Brutes Men; or Men Brutes. So that whatever Natures they had given them, or whatever Relations they stood in, they must always have acted according to these, in order to obey the divine Will: A Brute according to the Impulses of its instinctive Nature, thereby to receive sensual Pleasure; and a Man according to the Dictates of his Reason, thereby to receive intellectual Pleasure. This, be sure, is
what

what every body will allow. But then, whatever Way God had form'd Things, or whatever were his wise Constitution of 'em; he must always have seen the necessary Distinction there is between Pleasure and Pain; that one tended to produce Happiness; t'other to create Uneasiness and Misery; that the former, for this Reason, was more eligible than the latter; and, that it did not depend upon his Will at all, to change the Nature of either of 'em: But, Pleasure must, necessarily and eternally be Pleasure; Pain, necessarily and eternally be Pain. And, whatever intelligent Creatures existed, or whatever Natures they were indued withal, they must find a sensible Difference between them; that one was more fit and desirable than the other; one more conducive to Happiness than t'other. From which it is abundantly evident, that, altho' the several Natures and Faculties of Beings, did, in some measure, depend upon the Will of God; or, tho' he was not under an immediate Obligation, to make such an Inequality among them; but, for any thing we know, might have form'd them otherwise, or, perhaps, might not have created any at all; yet, be this how it will, the Fitness of Pleasure, beyond Pain; of Moral Good, beyond Moral Evil; and the various Proportions, Reasons, or Relations, which Things severally bear to one another; cannot, in any wise depend upon his Will, but in point of Order are prior to it. And,

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WITHOUT this Concession the unavoidable Consequence of all is, that he is either an evil, or an arbitrary Being; which I shall shortly prove thus.

WHATEVER God wills, or rather, whatever is will'd by God, is either fit, or unfit, in its own Nature; or neither fit nor unfit; or else is only fit, or unfit, after he wills it.

IF it be fit in its own Nature, then it cannot depend upon his Will for its Fitness, but must be independent of it, and previous to it.

IF it be unfit in its own Nature, then, he cannot will it, unless he's an evil Being; because no perfectly well-dispos'd Mind, such as we conceive God to be, can will (*i. e.* can desire or approve of) any Thing that's unfit.

IF it be neither fit nor unfit, then, 'tis nothing; all Things (as I've already prov'd) natural, moral, existent, or possible, being one of these.

IF it be only fit, or unfit, after he wills it, or makes it so; then, he must certainly be an arbitrary Being; because, he makes Things just as he wills; and, so may alter the Nature of moral Good, or Evil, at Pleasure, regardless of any moral Difference between them.

IF it be again said, that he's an infinitely perfect Being; that his Will is always directed by his infinitely perfect Counsels; that he cannot will Evil, while it is so directed; nor

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will arbitrarily, because that wou'd argue him to change, either for the better or worse, and, therefore prove him not infinitely perfect; I answer,

T H A T this never alters the Case at all. For, when we talk of the Divine Will being directed by infinite Perfection, or infinitely perfect Counsels (since I must use this Word) we always understand, as the Expression implies, that there is some moral Nature or Object, to which God is directed, or about which his Perfections are conversant; or else we understand nothing at all by it. And this Moral Nature or Object is either numerically, and specifically distinct from his Perfections and Will; or, it is not. If it is not thus distinct; then it must be the same with his own Nature, and so he can will nothing excepting himself but his Will must be directed by his Perfections and Counsels; and these, again, by his Will; and, here is a continual Circle among 'em, while nothing is either consulted about, directed to, or will'd, but God himself. But,

I F such Moral Object be distinct from his Perfections or Will; then must it be fit or unfit in its own Nature, since all Things, as I've prov'd, must be resolv'd into one of these. And consequently, if he is not regulated by their moral Differences, he must be an evil, or an arbitrary Being. Again, if it be said,

T H A T abstracted Ideas, before the Creation of the World, cou'd arise from nothing, but

but from the Mind of God, nor have existed in any Mind, unless they had, first, in his; and, therefore, that his Nature and Perfections are the primary Foundation of such Ideas, and of all moral Differences of Things; I answer,

1. **T H A T** to speak of abstract Ideas, arising from any Mind, is a flat Contradiction in Terms, especially in the Sense in which they are here intended; because we understand by them such Moral Entities, as are self-existent, or that don't depend upon any Being for their Existence, but may be consider'd abstractly, or separately, without the Consideration of any Subject: And therefore, to say, that they must arise from the Mind of God, is to destroy our Notion of 'em; or, to say, that they are both abstract and not abstract, at the same Time; which is absurd. I answer,

2. **T H A T** whatever Ideas did arise in the Mind of God, before the Creation of the World, must be suppos'd to have had some Moral Nature or Entity for their Object, otherwise they cou'd not be Ideas, or Images of any Thing, but mere Resveries, floating at Random, and corresponding to nothing at all.

A N D this Object must have been distinct from such Ideas; and been likewise fit, or unfit, or have referr'd to something that was so in itself; else it could be no Object. If it was of the Nature of a Proposition; it was true or false; and so was fit, or unfit, as it might refer to Discourse. If it was of the

Nature of a moral Quality ; 'twas good or bad ; and so was fit or unfit, as it might refer to Actions.

THIS Object, again, must, in point of Order, be prior to such Ideas ; because to suppose it only co-ordinate and exactly simultaneous with them ; or posterior to them ; wou'd destroy the Nature of both ; the one, in such Case, not being the Object of such Ideas, nor the others, the Ideas of such Object, when the natural Order of Priority, and Succession, which are necessary to their moral Relation, is inverted.

THEREFORE the Differences of Things, fit and unfit, good and evil, true and false, which might have been Objects of God's Ideas before the Creation of the World ; cou'd not arise from his Mind at all, nor depend upon his Will for their Existence.

3. I Answer, that if the moral Differences of these Things aforesaid did primarily arise from the Mind of God, or if his Mind were the Foundation or Support of them ; the moral Natures of each must likewise arise from it ; and thus he must as naturally will Evil as Good, and approve of Vice and Virtue alike. There is no avoiding this Consequence, unless it can be proved, that there may be a Difference without different Ideas or Objects, which were the same thing as to say, there may be a Difference when there is no Difference ; or that a Thing may be the same with and different from it self, at one and the same Time. For if the Nature of moral Good, which

which is different from Evil, or the Nature of Truth, which is different from Falshood, did wholly arise from the Divine Will; then the Nature of moral Evil, which is different from Good, and the Nature of Falshood which is different from Truth, by parity of Reason must arise from it. And, by this Means, all Sorts of Propositions relating to Discourse; and all Sorts of Qualities relating to Actions; whether true or false, good or evil, must be equally conformable to it; since the moral Natures of each entirely arose from it: And thus it will follow, either that God is an indolent Being, regardless of all that passes in the World, and an unconcerned Spectator of humane Actions; which is rank Epicurism; or else that there are two distinct and opposite Divinities, differently approving of Good and Evil, which is downright Manicheism.

BUT as these things are so absurd in themselves, of such dangerous Consequence to civil Society, and reflect so much Dishonour upon the Almighty; as they destroy his Unity, reproach his Goodness, and throw a Blemish upon his pure and holy Nature: Therefore 'tis safer and better to allow, that the moral Differences of Things, of Ideas, or of Propositions, which, before the Creation of the World, were Objects of God's Perception; did not primarily arise from his Mind or Will; but in point of Order were previous to it; and, likewise, that they self-existent, independent, and absolutely eternal; incapable of suffering any Alteration or Change,
and

and as necessary as the Existence of God himself.

IF it be said, that to make the moral Differences of Things as necessary as the Existence of God himself, is to make the Existence of Things as necessary as his Existence ; I Answer,

THAT, if by Things we do (as we should) understand the moral Natures of Things possible, otherwise called Images or Ideas, which depend upon the Operations of any Mind, but are only moral Objects for any Understanding to be exercised about : I allow (and I have already proved) that to make their Differences necessary, is to make their Natures necessary, because there could be no Differences without distinct Natures, and no distinct Natures without a Plurality. But if by Things we do (as our Author would have us) understand Things, which we call created or made, such as Angels, Men, Brutes, Plants, or the like ; then I deny that to make their Differences necessary, is to make their real Existence, in the same Sense, necessary.

ALL Things, indeed, may be called necessarily existent while they are preserved in Being by the Creator's Power ; because 'tis impossible for any thing to be, and not be, at the same Time. But this is only a necessary Existence of a secondary Nature, entirely dependent upon the Will of God, and deduced from the Impossibility of supposing, that two contrary Propositions should be, at
once,

once true ; and no more is intended when we speak about it, than that while any thing exists, it must exist ; tho' still the Divine Being is able to reduce it to a State of Non-existence.

BUT the Differences of Things uncreated, and created too, the Differences, for instance, between moral Good and Evil, between an Angel and a Man, are necessary in an absolute Sense, or in other Words are self-existent ; and would have eternally remained the same that they are now, if neither of those Creatures had been formed, or if one of them only had been formed ; or if neither Good nor Evil had been done, or if one of them only had been done. This may seem at first to be a Paradox, but it will be found, upon Enquiry, undeniable Truth.

FOR, all such Differences are to be considered only as peculiar Relations ; or ideal Properties which refer to Things, possible, as well as really existent. And as there is no necessary or immediate Connexion between Possibility and real Being ; therefore the necessary Differences between moral Good and Evil, between an Angel and a Man, cannot infer that Good or Evil must necessarily have been done, or that Men or Angels must neither have existed : Consequently, to make their Differences necessary as God's Existence, cannot make their real Existence, in the same Sense necessary as his. Indeed,

ACCORDING to our Author's Scheme, all Things in the World must have been from Eternity,

Eternity, and existed as necessarily as God himself ; for he confounds his natural and moral Attributes, allows of no Distinction between them, but makes him as necessarily (and in the same Sense) good, as he's omnipresent ; which will unavoidably infer an eternal and necessary Creation. Whereas though God be, in some Respects, necessarily good and just ; yet we do not understand that he is so, in the same Sense, and Manner in which he's infinite, eternal, or the like. No ; all that we mean when we talk of his necessary Goodness, Justice, or the like, is that as his Understanding is infallible, and subject to no Error or Mistake, therefore he's qualified for perfectly Discerning the moral Differences of Things ; and whenever he's determined to act by Will and Choice, he must be supposed to do it for good Ends rather than bad, there being no Defect in his natural or moral Capacity to prevent him *. So that when he formed the World, he must do it with Exactness ; when he governs his Creatures, he must do it with Skill ; when he prescribes Laws to them, he must do for their Advantage ; when he promises to reward their Obedience, he must act according to Fidelity ; when he judges them, he must do it in Righteousness ; when he pronounces Sentence upon them, he must do it with Equity and Justice. But the bare understanding the moral Differences

* *Fas autem nec est, nec unquam fuit, quicquam nisi pulcherrimum facere eum qui esset optimus. Cic.*

ferences of Things, or seeing that one Way was more eligible than another, did not, nor cou'd not lay him under a physical Necessity to do any of these; for by this means, he must have done them from Eternity, and must also continue doing them to Eternity; which is absurd. But, he was morally free to act, or not act, and to act at one Time, rather than another, as his unerring Judgment, and Will (determined by proper Reasons which we are ignorant of, and should therefore confess that we are so, rather than saucily presume to say what they were) disposed or inclined him. And,

HEREIN, as I take it, consists the Nature of God's being necessarily, and be at the same Time, freely, just and good. He's necessarily just and good, upon the whole, in all his transient Acts; but his transient Acts are not necessary, or in other Words, Justice and Goodness are essential to him, and therefore are necessary in a physical Sense. But Actions depend upon his Will and Choice, and therefore are free in a moral Sense. And unless we admit of this Distinction, we must allow the eternal Production of all Things in the World; introduce an absolute Fatality into it; and deny all Free-agency in God or Man.

AND, as the Proportions or Disproportions of Things constitute their Beauty or Deformity, their Fitness or Unfitness; so 'tis the having a Capacity to discern their moral Differences, or to perceive the superiour Excellence

cellence of one Thing beyond another, that, truly, binds any Being whatever to distinguish them, and to act one Way rather than another. Upon this Account,

THE Divine Being having an infinitely perfect Capacity, which enables him to make the truest Judgment of Things, and to see that one is more eligible than t'other is obliged (through the inherent Rectitude of his Nature) to chuse Good rather than Evil, whenever he's determined to act. And hence it is, that he's perfectly well qualified to act the Part of a Lawgiver to his Creatures, and to prescribe or reveal such Rules to them, as are proper and fit in their own Nature, and useful to direct them in the Conduct of their Lives.

HENCE it is too, that Mankind being indued with Reason, and capable of seeing that some Things are beautiful and fit, others base and unfit, are led to believe the former to be the Will of God, since he's a Being of perfect Wisdom and Goodness: And are therefore obliged in all their Actions, to pay a Regard to them, as Things which he approves, and commands to be one: The Doing which is an Acknowledgment of all his infinite Perfections.

HENCE it is, again, that Brutes devoid of Reason, and unable to discover the moral Differences of Things, cannot be under any moral Obligation, nor subject to any moral Government or Laws.

FROM

FROM this it will follow, that no Laws can bind, till the Subjects can discern the Usefulness of them; the Non-discernment, when it's not voluntary, nor occasioned by any wilful Neglect, being just the same as the Want of a Capacity.

FOR the same Reason, all deliberate Actions, which Men presume upon, before they're convinced of the Lawfulness of them, must be unreasonable, and therefore sinful; for whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin *.

FOR the same Reason too, all Things which Men do for the best, or with a sincere and honest Mind, according to their several Opportunities or Circumstances in the World, must be accepted in the Sight of God.

THEREFORE a supernatural Revelation cannot be absolutely necessary to the Salvation of Mankind; nor can Man be, in any wise, much less eternally, punished for not obeying Laws that never were promulged to them; since that would make their Punishment unjust, when they committed no Fault proportionable to it.

CONSEQUENTLY Sincerity must be the Terms of Men's Acceptance with God; and Faith in Christ which is made the Condition of their Salvation, must be a sincere and rational Obedience to the Gospel Laws, so far as they can discern the Fitness of them, and are capable of living conformably to them.

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THUS

* Rom. 14. v. ult.

THUS I have endeavoured to make it appear, that there is an eternal Difference between the Beauty and Deformity, the Fitness and Unfitness of Things, prior to the Consideration of any Mind; and that this Difference, the Beauty of one Thing beyond another, or the Fitness of one Thing beyond another, is the Foundation of Morality to God and Man. And likewise, that to make the Divine Will the Foundation of it, is to remove the Boundaries between Virtue and Vice, and drive all Religion out of the World at once.

AND I am perfectly sure, that our Author (who is a Man of very great Piety, and is possessed of as many humane Virtues as any Person at all) did intend nothing, by all he has advanced, but to promote the Glory of our common Creator, and settle Religion upon (what he thought) the firmest Foundation. But yet his Principles have a direct Tendency to overthrow it, and to make Mankind grow as unconcerned about it, as the very Beasts of the Field, or the Fowls of Heaven.

THE grand Cause of his Mistakes in this Controversy, is, his not distinguishing between the Fitness of Things, which is the Foundation of Morality; and the Capacity of the Subject, which is, only, the Rule of Judgment. The not considering these distinctly, I say, but blending or confounding them, so oddly as he has done, is the Occasion of all the Contradictions, Absurdities and Errors, which

which he has plung'd himself into. Yet thus he has deviated from, and acted contrary to, all Rules of Reason*, by resolving all moral Differences of Things into the Divine Will; thinking at the same Time, that he pays the Almighty a great Compliment by it. Whereas, indeed and in truth, the Fitness or Unfitness, the Beauty or Deformity of Things, have no more Dependence upon Understanding or Will, than they have upon Memory. Nor cou'd he have thrown a greater Affront upon the Blessed God than to represent his Will, as the efficient Cause of the Difference between moral Good and Evil: As any one will see, that will think.

BUT our Author did not think very deep, when he took up with such Principles; otherwise he wou'd have seen the glaring Absurdities, and dangerous Consequences that attend them, and so wou'd not have publish'd them to the World.

MEAN time, in one Line he seems to grant all that I've been contending for, tho' by some Way or other, he makes a Shift to deny it in the next. For, he tells us, "that God is the only unerring Judge of what is fit or unfit for him to do." Which plainly implies, and by which he virtually acknowledges, that there is some moral Object, which

* Nam & communis intelligentia nobis notas res efficit; easque in animis nostris inchoat, ut honesta in virtute ponantur, in vitiis turpia. Hæc autem in opinione exultimare, non in naturâ ponere, dementis est, *Cic. de Leg.*

is of such a Nature, whereof God forms a Judgment before he's determin'd to act. Yet, in the same Breath, he says, (thereby intending to destroy all moral Differences in Things, prior to the Divine Appointment) " that God " consults with himself alone, and not with " another, not with any Thing *ab extra*, or, " that can be said, truly and properly, to be " distinct from him." This is really super-excellent! But who in all the World ever imagin'd or said, that he consults with any other Being, about what he should do? None sure ever did; for every one will allow, that he needs no Advice; and, that there's none capable to give it him. But does it therefore follow, that he acts arbitrarily and at random, because no other Being can direct him? This certainly were very injurious to say of the only wise and good God. Yet as injurious as it is, 'tis what follows, upon Supposition, that there is nothing fit or unfit in its own Nature, previous to his Constitution of it: As I've abundantly made appear, in what I said before.

NOR will *ab extra*, here, mend the Matter one Jot. 'Tis indeed, extra—ordinary Metaphysicks; but extr—emely weak. And I'll maintain, that *ab intra*, in this place, wou'd have done as well, if not better. For tho' it wou'd not have made such an Extr—insic Appearance; yet it wou'd have had in some Respects, more intr—insic good Sense in it.— However let us
by

by what this *ab extra* will do, when put to it; for it seems to have a daring Outside. Our Author, I suppose, intends this by it; *viz.* that, as there cou'd be no moral Differences of Things, no Ideas, nor Propositions, *extra Deum*, before the Creation of the World; therefore his Will is the Foundation of them, from which they arose as their efficient Cause. This, as I take it, is what is here intended. And it is not only very erroneous, but also pernicious in its Consequence, as it destroys all the Fences which shou'd secure Virtue. For by the same Argument, any Man may prove that all the Sins, whether Murders, Adulteries, Idolatries, Rapines, Frauds, or any other, which Persons have been guilty of, since the Creation of the World, were all the Effects of the Divine Will; and must be conformable to it; since none of these were committed *extra Deum*: And then what a vast Prejudice this wou'd do to Religion, as it gives an unbounded Scope to all vicious Inclinations, he must be very short-sighted, that cannot discern.

I might easily show, how our Author, by making the Relations of Things depend upon the Will of God, advances the strongest Argument for the Support of *Arianism* that he could produce. But as this would prejudice a great many honest simple Bodies, both in Town and Country against him; I shall not enter upon a particular Consideration of it.

I can't, however, help observing this horrid Absurdity, which he was driven to. Being aware how he would be pinch'd in his Argument, by making God act, in all respects, purely for his Will and Pleasure; he puts in this Plea for his own Defence; *viz.* "But here
 " let this common (it should have been un-
 " common) Thought be attended to, that as
 " God was perfectly blessed in himself, the
 " creating of all Things for his Pleasure can-
 " not be understood to add to his Pleasure or
 " Blessedness, but to communicate it." This is really the likest Conjuring of any Thing in the World. For all along thro' his Remarks he represents the Perfections and Will of God as inseparable, or as impossible to be separated without destroying the very Notion of him; and now when he talks of God's Design in Creation, he says it was to communicate them. And if this were true, it would follow, that whatever intelligent or sensitive Beings he form'd, they must all have had infinite Perfections, and Blessedness communicated to them; and consequently there would be as many infinitely perfect Beings in the Universe, as there are Angels, Men, &c. which were strange Jargon, and would make an odd Sound in a Heathen, let be a Christian, Country. Nor,

Can I help observing his unaccountable Weakness in trumping up those Catechism Words, that God does all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will. How unlikely

ly are they to give any Authority to his Arguments, or to make 'em have any Weight with Men of Sense or Judgment. That little Treatise which he values so much, was once, 'tis true, in great request. But now (I'm sorry I have it to say) 'tis esteem'd by no Body, excepting a few old Women, who like every thing best that's old fashion'd; nor is there scarce any thing reckon'd valuable in it, but the Commandments; and even these, too many (God forgive them) don't regard, nor the Reasons annex'd to them neither, but presume they may do all that's necessary by meer Dint of Faith: So doleful always are the Consequences of acting purely by Will, when the Reasons of Things are not attended to; and so much Mischief does it occasion to Civil Society.

As for what he tells us, concerning the Obligations we are under to submit our Reason to the reveal'd Will of God, and to let our Understandings be guided by it; 'tis hardly, indeed, worth taking Notice of, the Weakness of it is so palpable and evident. Yet I cannot but think it proper to take it to task, in order to prevent the bad Effects it might have, in misleading Christians, and exposing them to innumerable Errors.

WHAT! are Mankind, indeed, to lay aside their Reason, or to take up with any Interpretation of Scripture that first occurs to them? Or are they to yield an implicit Faith to all Principles or Doctrines, which

are presum'd to come from God? If this be our Author's Way of managing, I hope it shall never be mine. No; whatever Helps Men are favoured with; or after whatever Manner God may speak to them, they must always be conducted by their own Understandings, and by them form a Judgment of what he declares, in order to discharge their Duty aright. The principal Design of the Christian Revelation was to rouse Mankind out of that spiritual Lethargy and fatal Stupidity, which had benumb'd their reasonable Powers, and brought them down, almost, upon a Level with the brutal World. And for the better Accomplishing this good Design, God was pleas'd to send them an extraordinary Messenger, who wrought divers Miracles before them, in order to set their Thoughts on Work, and thereby conciliate their Attention to what he was to propose and declare to them. But still their own Reason was always to be the Rule, whereby they were to judge of all that he did or said. Wherefore if he had delivered any Doctrines, or enjoin'd any Precepts, which (after they had divested themselves of all Prejudices, and were come to a proper Way of Thinking) they found to be contrary to their own Reason; they cou'd be under no Obligation to believe or receive them; since That, in all Cases, must be their Guide, and the true Touchstone of Good or Evil. And with us it must be the same as with them.

And, HEREIN

HEREIN lies the Glory, as well as the Advantage of the Gospel Revelation, namely, in exhibiting such a lively Transcript of human Nature, and containing Principles and Doctrines, Laws and Commandments, so perfectly consonant to the purest Reason; that when a Man has examin'd it, and is convinc'd of its Truth, he can have recourse to it, upon every Occasion; behold, as in a Glass, his natural Image; and see the Obligations he's under to God and Man, just as they're engrav'd in his own Breast; and thereby be reminded of his whole Duty.

BUT when Persons are told that they must allow the Bible to guide their Reason, it is not only very absurd in itself; but it also exposes that sacred Book to the Contempt and Ridicule of all its Enemies; makes others question its Divine Authority; and causes those who aim at setting its Doctrines in a rational Light, to be suspected by the Populace as no hearty Friends to it, and as advancing Principles inconsistent with those which it contains. Or when, perhaps, they recommend the most important Duties of the Christian Religion, in a rational Way, or, as they think, after the most unexceptionable Manner; they'll be represented as doing these Things only under a Mask of Infidelity.

HOWEVER, by the bye, 'tis Reason, that divine and heavenly Principle, which distinguishes us from Brutes; makes us allied to the Angels; and gives us a Resemblance to

God himself. 'Tis his own Image stamp'd upon our Nature; and the greatest Ornament and Glory of it. 'Tis the Candle of the Lord * in our own Breasts; and when it was dimm'd and obscur'd thro' Darknes and Ignorance, thro' Immorality and Lewdness, which always weakens its Strength and Splendor the Sun of Righteousness shin'd in among us, to light it up again by his sacred Beams. And,

It was the not being guided by it, that occasion'd all the Disorders, that are, or ever were in the Universe. That first flung Angels out of Heaven; that expell'd Man out of Paradise; that brought a Deluge upon the antient World; that made the *Jews* follow every idle Impostor; the Heathens be seduc'd by corrupt Priests; that causes the *Mahometans* to believe Absurdities; that makes the *Papists* disbelieve their Senses, and some *Protestants* believe Contradictions. In fine, 'tis the not being guided by Reason that puts an End to all Liberty, introduces Slavery, and establishes arbitrary and despotick Power: That spoils Cities; ruins Nations; overthrows Kingdoms; destroys Empires; and breeds Confusion in Church and State. So that if we give up Reason, we give up all; convert the World into a perfect *Babel*, and render a Revelation entirely useless; as we have no Rule left us to judge by, but must catch, at random, at every Appearance of Things, and every Sense of them that first comes uppermost; which may happen at the same time to be very

* Prov. xx. 27.

erroneous, and prove very pernicious and hurtful to us.

AND yet there is nothing more common than to hear Men every Day crying down Reason, and, by Way of Burlesque, calling it Humane; as if any more could be requir'd of a Man, than what he really has, or is possess'd of. And for the better proving the Weakness of it, they'll run as far as the *African* or *American* Islands, and trump up the Enormities, Immoralities, and Barbarities of the Natives, who have nothing but their Reason to direct them. Whereas these Things ought not to be scor'd down upon Reason, any more than the sinful Practices of Christians ought to be charg'd upon Revelation; but upon Men's corrupt Passions, and vicious Inclinations, to which they have given unreasonable Scope, and allow'd an unnatural Liberty. Nor, can I think, that Reason or Nature ever made any Man wicked * in Practice, or atheistical in Principle; but some peculiar Lust or Appetite, which he has unnaturally acquir'd, and which he has immoderately indulg'd, until it has gain'd the Ascendant in his Affections, blinded his Judgment, and captivated his Will. This I take to be the Cause of Men's Vices, and often of their Errors too. But Reason or Nature never can be the Cause of either, especially in the Sense in which I understand them.

* Non enim in facultatibus sunt vitia, sed in habitibus: habitus autem ex electione & voluntate sunt. Itaque nostrâ ipsorum electione & voluntate improbi evadimus, non naturâ sumus. *Nemes. de Nat. Hom.*

IT can never, therefore, be the true Way of defending Revelation, to run down humane Reason. Nor will such a Method of proceeding, ever have any good Effects, towards advancing the Religion of *Jefus*. For it ought carefully to be observ'd, and maturely to be consider'd, that by vilifying or aspersing the latter, Men weaken the Interest of the former; because in so doing they take away the Rule, by which, alone, they can judge of any thing; and so render both of them uncertain and precarious; since the Goodness of the one can only be judg'd of, by the Goodness of the other: And, by this Means, manage like the Animal in the Fable, who to catch the Shadow, let go the Substance, and thereby lost both.

IF our learned Author had said, that Men should take all their religious Sentiments from Scripture, and not depend upon any humane Authorities (how sacred and venerable soever they may be) for them; I should have thought that a very pertinent Expression, and, likewise a proper and suitable Advice; as it might tend to promote true Knowledge, and secure genuine Liberty among Christians: Though even in this Case, every Man's Reason must be his Guide, and the last Interpreter of Scripture to him. But to tell us, " That
 " the following the Reason and Nature of
 " Things, hath made many slight and blas-
 " pheme the revealed Will of God; and others
 " greatly pervert the Scriptures, by explain-
 " ing them according to their frail precon-
 " ceived

“ceived Notions of the Reason of Things;
 “instead of allowing that sacred Book to
 “guide their Reason and be its own Inter-
 “preter”; to speak thus, I say, is but idle
 Rant ; and it may go down glibly with some
 People, set weak and enthusiastick Heads a
 shaking, and draw out an, ay, ay ; that’s true ;
 and we are poor fallible Creatures ; and Lord
 help us ; and what’s our Reason ? ’tis but
 humane ; and away with it, or the like ; but
 it will make Men of Sense or Judgment shake
 their Heads another way ; and say, that let
 the Dr. think himself ever so right, he’s very
 wrong ; that he has given Proof of considerable
 Weakness ; that he overthrows all Natural
 Religion ; renders Revealed quite useless to
 us ; and drives both out of the World at a
 Crack. This is what Men of Sense will say
 to themselves, and to one another, though,
 perhaps, they won’t tell the Dr. himself so.

Thus I have animadverted upon the most
 material Things in his Remarks ; and given,
 what appears to me, a sufficient Answer to
 them. And, at the same time, I might have
 shown several Contradictions and Absurdities
 which he has committed, and how he has
 misrepresented Authors, particularly Mr. *Lock*,
 who, in the tenth Section of that very Chapter
 which he refers to, says, that “Virtue and
 “Vice are Names pretended and suppos’d e-
 “very where to stand for Actions in their
 “own Nature, right or wrong ; and that as far
 “as they really are so applied, they so far
 “are co-incident with the Divine Law.”

Book

Book II. of his Essay, Chap. 28. But these I shan't now stay to consider at large, but leave them to the Observation of those, who may read the Controversy on both Sides.

MEAN while, I must declare to the World, that I have not yet read one Line of Mr. Mole's Sermon, nor Preface, excepting what is quoted in the D---r's Remarks; and therefore I hope none will imagine, that what I have said, is done with a Design to defend him. Such an Attempt, in me, be sure, wou'd look very presumptuous, and with an Air of very great Arrogance and Conceit; the ingenious Author himself being vastly better qualified, to write upon any Subject, and especially in his own Defence, than I can pretend to be. All that I have aim'd at is to defend Truth, (which lies open and free to every body) without being attach'd to any Party or Interest whatsoever. And as the Doctor happen'd once to go wrong, I thought it but agreeable to the Reason and Fitness of Things, to endeavour, to the utmost of my Ability, to set him right; remembring at the same Time, that it's most congruous to the Will of God to do it; and what he has expressly commanded in the Christian Revelation.

A new I persuade my self, that the Doctor will be so far from thinking the worse of me for such an Attempt, that he will reckon himself oblig'd to me for it. "My real desire is to serve him; either by altering his Sentiments, or by putting him into such a Way of expressing them, as may be less offensive, and more useful."

I shall only add, that however differently we may conceive about such Points, we ought always to be tenderly affected one towards another; strive, above all Things, to love one another; and to practise *Charity in all its Branches.*

F I N I S.

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